

RTM Parks and Recreation Committee Meeting of March 6, 2017 Minutes

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm by Adele Conniff. Attending were Adele Conniff, Diane Conologue, Bill van Loan, Ken Fiveson, Curtis Butler, Susan Lauritzen (arrived ca. 7:45 pm), and Harry McLachlin. Absent were Andrew Miller, Cheryl Russell, Phyllis Hawkins Carlo Cantavero and Tim Goertl. Mary Flynn, Parks and Recreation Commission Chairman, attended as an observer.
2. Approval of Minutes. The minutes of the Committee's meeting of January 9, 2017 were approved by a vote of 5-0, with 3 abstentions.
3. Parks and Recreation Budget Update. Adele reviewed developments concerning the P&R budget recently passed by the Board of Selectmen and to be considered by the Board of Finance in late March or early April. In the Capital Improvements section proposed major expense for Cherry Lawn playground equipment was cut and there was discussion of the pros and cons of charging a convenience fee for fees paid by credit card, as expense for credit card fees aggregate about \$58,000 (of which "beach stickers" account for \$8-9,000).
4. Master Park Plan Questionnaire Review. Adele reported receiving comments by several members on the questionnaires, which Parks and Recreation Commission members will also be providing to consultants engaged to do the Master Park Plan project. Notable strengths of the Department mentioned were a) quality of maintenance and appearance of facilities; b) good reputation and customer satisfaction; and c) variety of offerings for all ages. Various other points of the questionnaires were discussed by all with "more green space" noted as a major priority for the future and "budget constraints/tax rates" seen as key issues of political sensitivity for consultants to be aware of. Adele is compiling comments on questionnaire items and members can forward additional thoughts to her.
5. Chairman's Report. Adele reported the "stakeholder's meeting" as part of the Master Park Plan process will be Tuesday March 14 11:30-12:15 at Town Hall and sign ups thru Pam Gery for evening focus groups were encouraged for those unable to attend. Consultants' presentation on Master Park Plan process is on VIMEO. She also noted the Junior Sailing Program at Weed Beach will continue this summer.
6. Other Business. Adele mentioned the "Hecker property" acquisition, on which the Committee will likely be secondary, is moving forward and distributed a chain of emails for background. With acquisition cost of \$275,000 to be covered by grants from the Land Trust of Darien and the State of Connecticut (each to be recognized with a plaque) the only cost to the Town will be closing costs for a projected preserving the flood plain; the Board of Selectmen will request the RTM to approve accepting the Land Trust grant. Assuming more definitive information becomes available a Committee meeting prior to the RTM meeting of March 20 is likely.
7. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Harry McLachlin